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In the (admittedly remote) possibility you are looking for the pithy insight, marketing savvy and deathless prose of [Francis Anderson](#) ... my blog has moved to [here...](#)



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[The exciting world of, er, Packaging](#)
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No, really! Good [article](#) in the New York Times today,



[Parenthetically, there was a nice piece on Adverlab a while ago on ["Smelly Packaging"](#) and its role in prompting impulse purchase.]

Characteristically, the AAAA Smartbrief headlined its article about the NY Times article "Packaging as ad vehicles". I am probably splitting hairs, but I think its more about communication than advertising. The power of packaging (and display) is huge, especially in the impulse category, but packaging often plays a different role to advertising.

The New York Times article says:

The shift is mostly because of the rise of the Internet and hundreds of television channels, which mean marketers can no longer count on people seeing their commercials.

So they are using their bottles, cans, boxes and plastic packs to improve sales by attracting the eyes of consumers, who often make most of their shopping decisions at the last minute while standing in front of store shelves.

"The media is fragmented, and we can't find people — we can't get them to sit down and listen to our argument on a television spot," said Jerry Kathman, chief executive of LPK, a brand agency based in Cincinnati. "The package can convey that argument."

I think the key is to remember what **behavior** the communication vehicle (for want of a better term) is designed to affect. Packaging is arguably going to be less effective at building beliefs and associations around brands than advertising (or some other branded experience), but crucial to prompting purchase at the moment of impulse (deciding between sodas in the chiller).

Similarly, advertising is far removed in space and time from the moment of decision between brands, but can be effective at getting brands on to the consumer's consideration set.

As my old mentor [Carl Johnson](#) used to say, let's get beyond the ["Tyranny of Or"](#). There's no doubt that media is fragmenting, but let's focus on the right communications **mix**.



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I don't know whether to be proud of the marketing industry (marketing is clearly working in this example!) or ashamed. A recent study found that branding (in this case McDonald's) actually makes food products taste better. Even carrots, milk and apple juice tasted better to the kids when they were wrapped in the familiar packaging of the Golden Arches. The study had youngsters sample identical McDonald's foods in name-brand and unmarked wrappers. The unmarked foods always lost the taste test.



The study involved 63 poor children ages 3 to 5. Robinson believes the results would be similar for children from wealthier families.

The study likely will stir more debate over the movement to restrict ads to kids. It comes less than a month after 11 major food and drink companies, including McDonald's, announced new curbs on marketing to children under 12. This has been a particularly [hot topic](#) in the UK, with a proposed [ban](#) on all junk food advertising to kids...

McDonald's says the only [Happy Meals](#) it will promote to young children will contain [fruit](#) and have fewer calories (er, not a particularly challenging benchmark) and less fat. "The fact is, parents make the decisions for their children and our research confirms that we've earned their trust as a responsible marketer based on decades of delivering the safest food," spokesman Walt Riker said.

Just two of the 63 children studied said they'd never eaten at McDonald's, and about one-third ate there at least weekly.



There is no doubt that children are, and always have been particularly susceptible to marketing ... I mean, which one of us wasn't desperate for [KerPlunk](#) or [Sea Monkeys](#)? Or am I alone in that!

We should take solace that the situation used to be more extreme ... who knew that in the 1950s, the [Winston](#) cigarette's pitchman was none other than Bedrock resident Barney Rubble ...

